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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 KABUL 000699

SIPDIS

EO 12958 DECL: 02/25/2020  
TAGS PGOV, PREL, AF  
SUBJECT: PRESSING KARZAI FOR ELECTORAL REFORM

REF: A. KABUL 645 B. KABUL 692

Classified By: Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (S) Summary: Ambassador Eikenberry and Deputy Ambassador Ricciardone demarched President Karzai and his inner circle on the problems of the

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To the Advisors: Protect Democracy and the Relationship  
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2. (S) On February 24, Deputy Ambassador Ricciardone separately called on Presidential Chief of Staff Omer Daudzai, Education Minister (recent -- the election issue is a potential spoiler to a successful U.S. trip - and fixing it should be an urgent priority. Worse, it threatens to turn He left a non-paper (para 15) with Daudzai and Wardak, who promised to raise this issue "the Afghan way."

3. (S) Daudzai made excuses for having "missed the import of the decree," which we had raised with him prospectively on February 8. He said it

4. (S) Minister of Education Wardak agreed that the decree gives Karzai's critics the evidence they want that he is not committed to democracy

5. (S) On February 25, Ambassador Eikenberry called on Minister of Finance Omer Zakhilwal who told him that he could "almost guarantee" that h

6. (S) Apparently echoing Daudzai, Zakhilwal went on to speak  
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candidly about Karzai, saying that he was an "extremely weak man" who did not listen to facts but was instead easily swayed by anyone who came

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Message to Karzai: Don't Put Success on the Line  
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7. (S) Meeting with Karzai, National Security Advisor Spanta and Deputy NSA Spinzada February 25, Ambassador Eikenberry asked Karzai what he w

8. (S) Eikenberry went on to explain that democracy-building in Afghanistan could be among Karzai's strongest legacies to the future and what

9. (S) At this point, before the planned one-on-one session, Karzai said he wanted Spanta to remain present. However, Spanta demurred, apparer

10. (S) Karzai appeared more attentive and Eikenberry went into greater detail. He said that the election is very important for us and that if

11. (S) Eikenberry continued that Karzai could also announce before his trip that he would be appointing two internationals to the ECC to whic  
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He added that the IEC had performed poorly, a point Karzai agreed with.

12. (S) He then asked Karzai to keep UNAMA and ISAF on the candidate vetting commission as observers. He pointed out that there are a lot of v

13. (S) The Ambassador then pointed out to Karzai that the appointment of independent internationals on these electoral bodies could be helpfu

14. (S) Comment: We will continue our engagement over the next several days with key Karzai ministers supportive of pragmatic electoral reform

15. (U) Begin non-paper text:  
Electoral Reform  
President Karzai made a firm commitment at the London Conference to put in place meaningful electoral reforms which reflect lessons learned frc  
The following three key measures are essential to ensuring the credibility of the Parliamentary electoral process and the success of the future  
-- Replacing the IEC chair with an independent and qualified official -- Maintaining the integrity of the ECC through a combination of independ  
The following key reforms would represent important steps towards constructive electoral reform that draw on the lessons learned in 2009:  
-- IEC staff committing or complicit in electoral offenses are dismissed -- IEC sessions are opened to accredited observers -- IEC-recommended  
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women and vulnerable groups in elections, both as candidates and voters -- Domestic observers and political party agents are supported and thei  
End non-paper text. RICCIARDONE